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ABSTRACT

Sample excerpts from e-mail discussion used in place of the traditional journal in freshman composition illustrate the fascinating issues raised in this new forum. E-mail allows confrontational statements that would not have been made face-to-face and puts in written form a dialogue for analysis by the entire class. A study concentrated on three women and their responses to an e-mail discussion on affirmative action. When a White male student entered the conversation criticizing Blacks for their abuse of food stamps, a female student called him on his stereotypical generalizations. Her response could be characterized as "subjective knowledge," as defined in "Women's Ways of Knowing." She used empathy to "share the experience that has led a person to an idea." A second female student entered the conversation but did not make use of narrative the way the first female student did. Rather than distrusting logical analysis, "Michelle" seemed to be saying that if people reason logically (and do not use faulty generalization), racism can be put to an end. Her response is characteristic of the procedural knowledge from "Women's Ways of Knowing." A third female student is more difficult to classify but intriguing to listen to. Her approach is Utopian: she compares the status quo to an ideal vision of what it could be. Sample evaluations show that the students regarded the listserv assignment positively; excerpts from the e-mail conversations are included, as is a course assignment. (TB)

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Transcending E-Mail Dissonance: The Mediating Effects of Feminine Rhetoric

by
Hallie S. Lemon

CCCC, March 27, Milwaukee 1996

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Sample excerpts from the e-mail discussion used in place of the traditional journal in my freshman composition class illustrate the fascinating issues raised by this new forum. E-mail allows confrontational statements which would not have been made face-to-face and puts in written form a dialogue for analysis by the entire class.

In my class's e-mail discussions, the black students deviated from the expectations of both the teacher, who tried to keep the discussion from becoming personal, and their white classmates who challenged each statement made. Five females entered the discussion: one gave her own example of preferential treatment of minorities; another said, "Don't worry about other people's attitudes"; and three tried to reason with both sides.

When I wrote this proposal, the class was at the break in this discussion; I wasn't sure how the semester would end, actually whether it would ever end, if some students would drop out of the class, or what and how I would resolve the issue. And, believe me, I got advice from everyone who would listen. I had promised the students that I would bring the issue back, and we would talk about it in a more formal, structured, "white" way (although I didn't

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know that I was implying the latter)(Response number 18 on your handout). My proposal then was rather tentative; I knew I had some fascinating material, but I wasn't sure what to do with it. So as I sat down to write this paper, I knew how the class ended, but I still hadn't decided which aspects of this material to discuss.

My spring 1995 180 class consisted of 22 students; 11 males and 11 females. Four were black, Jammie, a male, and a set of black male twins, Darrian and Rashaad. Three of the females were returning students: Cassandra a returning black female with two children, Mary, a returning student from an Italian background who had dropped out of community college, but who got into the college life by joining a sorority during the course of the semester, and Bobbi, who had begun the year in a basic English course to prepare her for 180. Three of the white males had been in the military: Paul, Joe and Smitty; Paul was also married and said the military had made him quite a racist until his wife "straightened him out" and taught him that he had been stereotyping blacks. Smitty, who tried to play around with the dialect of his Irish ancestors, lived with his mother after his father left and had been on welfare. Rachel's mother is a second grade teacher; Heather wrote of a reunion with her mother who had left the family when Heather was quite young. Michelle had two older brothers who had shown her the ropes of college life. Jeff and Adam were members of the school soccer team; Sarah had been quite active in high school athletics.

The discussion began in the middle of our diversity assignment in our 180 Freshman Composition class; we go through several prewriting exercises asking students to list all the groups they

belong to, consider the characteristics and privileges of at least one of these groups, discuss any family history of stereotyping, choose someone who differs from themselves in some way, interview that individual, and write a paper based upon that interview. In February of 1995 our school paper printed an editorial blasting minority scholarships which in turn was blasted by several student responses, one of these was Darrian's (1). He tried it out first on the Listserve. Smitty (2) and Paul (3) immediately responded.

Let me take five minutes here to just list the options I have considered. 1) The characteristics of the e-mail format itself: rapid communication, feelings which are closer to the surface, and a printed and permanent record of the discussion. 2) A required three entries a week on the Lemon-l Listserv replaced the journal requirement on which female students did quite well. So, an analysis of gender in relation to journals compared with e-mail; How and why did the males/females do better in this format?

Males: 4 A's; 3 B's; 4 C's

Females: 5 A's; 3 B's; 1 C; 2 F's

3) An analysis of the communication patterns of the black and white males. Using the characteristics identified by Thomas Kochman, the comments by Rashaad, Darrian and Jammie are typical of Black communication patterns; they are personal, universal, and confrontational. Several of the white males took these comments as provocation; why? 4) The way each group characterized themselves, the use of the terms, black, African American, minority, for example. 5) A focus on the interaction between just two of the male participants, Rashaad and Paul, for example, relating many of

the stories I learned about the two students in their other writings and through conferences. 6) The students, especially white males, who refused to enter in to the conversation and why. 7) Smitty's background story and entries.

7)The way the females in the class entered into the conversation...just an analysis of the different patterns of entry here. 9) The females' ways of understanding the issues as compared with the way the males understood the issues. 10) Several males told stories to illustrate how they learned something; how could their responses be characterized as feminine?

11) The best pedagogical response when issues of racism become the center of a composition class. I have a chapter in Western's series of multicultural books on the value of conflict:Ending the Silence:Encouraging Dissensus in the Contact Zone and therefore felt I would be hypocritical not to pursue this particular conflict. 12) The use of Contractualist Ethics for controversial issues. 13) The mistakes I made; although this is not the only time I've been accused of reacting as a white person, this was the only time I had a student follow me out of class and say, "That class just made me sick."

14) Alternative ways of discussing the issue of Affirmative Action in a composition class. I should have listened to one of Western's more famous alums, Linda Brodkey, when she visited in March; she said she has not been able to find any material on the topic that would lend itself to her system of teaching argument. She also told me to remind students making personal attacks that I had the grade book. I didn't take that advice either! 15) The

effect of such controversy on attendance rates of whites and blacks.

I finally decided to focus on the response of three of the female students: Sarah, Michelle and especially Rachel, who seemed to be the emotional center of the class for many of the students. Topic possibility #16! Your handout contains about 1/2 of the dialogue I have transcribed from the listserv; about 1/4 of the relevant material stored in my e-mail account, and a minuscule portion of the semester's writing I read for each student included.

Although Rachel was the first female to enter the conversation(8), I'm going to save her for last, like dessert. Both semesters I have tried a listserv, one woman became the center; this fall she was quite the opposite of Rachel and came in one on one in a more personal, down to earth way but never talked in class. Rachel was not shy about speaking in class.

Jeff(10) and Sarah (11) had been carrying on a friendly exchange of insults on the class listserv because they had gone to high schools who had been rivals in athletics. Jeff entered the discussion with a response stereotyping blacks based on personal observation.

> You see, where I'm from, when you walk out of Walgreens and see that red BMW pulling away and realize that was the black man or woman you were just standing behind wearing the leather and all the gucci sweats and they just got done paying for everything with food stamps, well, it just pisses me off. Another example is when I am at the grocery and the black guy in front of me is buying the best steaks and all the top notch stuff with food stamps, come on. It may not be like this everywhere, but where I am from, the black race whines about everything unless they are treated like royalty.

Sarah, who had been helping set up the displays for African

American History Month, responded to Jeff personally. This was the only female who directly addressed a particular male. Michelle's responses, although even more impassioned and also answering both black and white male responses, were directed to the class as a whole.

Sarah builds on Jeff's use of example to stereotype:

> Jeff, I just read your e-mail account, and I'm not sure I follow you either. Before I came to school, the only real associations I had with anyone black was during volleyball tournaments or basketball tournaments. That never really allowed me to talk to anyone--white or black--because when I was in competition with anyone on the courts, I wasn't exactly the sweetest person. Actually I was kinda mean.
>
> Anyway, I grew up without going to school with any black kids, and my dad grew up in a racist home, just like my grandfather. But my mother and sister aren't like that at all, and my father isn't bad; he just knows what his father and grandfather told him. I came to Western and made a lot of friends, including a lot of black friends. I'm not quite sure who does and doesn't accept that in my family and throughout my friends, but I know I don't feel sorry for any race. I've always been taught to treat everyone equal, and I truly see everyone's point, but I don't understand racism. Jeff, there are just as many white people or families that abuse food stamps as there are black families. I don't agree with that remark.

Sarah is using the previous discussions which she and Jeff had had to appeal to him; they had used athletics, so she used her own experiences. She points out that if she had been judged for just her behavior on an athletic court, she would not have been considered a very nice person. Her initial response could be characterized as Subjective Knowledge (Women's Ways of Knowing). Sarah is using empathy here to "share the experience that has led a person to an idea." (Belenky et al., quoted in Joan Livingston-Webber Multicultural Education Vol 3, p. 12). Sarah goes on to reason with him using a logical appeal about the numbers involved

in food stamp use.

Contrast her reaction with Jammie's (12), for example, which is much more characteristic of the black responses identified in Kochman. Note especially Jammie's final line in which he deliberately uses dialect to challenge Jeff. His was one of the responses which caused my reaction to stop the dialogue because I had had a conference with him after the first few entries. He agreed with my first reaction: keep the discussion going but ask to keep it less personal. I thought if he couldn't keep it cool, noone could. Rereading Jammie's after reading Kochman was a revelation; he's arguing in the "high-keyed, animated, confrontational" mode characteristic of Blacks.

Sarah's entry into the dialogue here also seemed to change the dynamics in the class. By the end of the semester, Sarah was in more closer contact with Darrian. When Sarah e-mailed a note about being sick over the weekend, Darrian called her to find out how she was. In fact, when the twins started missing class and failed to turn in assignments, I had Sarah talk with them. They, in turn, brought in Sarah's final paper just before the deadline.

Michelle (15) enters the conversation in reaction to a specific entry by Rashaad but does not personally address it to him the way Sarah has. Interestingly enough, Michelle had been sitting with Darrian and Rashaad in class and had been interacting with them in group work. This interchange seemed to alienate her from the twins while it drew them closer to Sarah.

> Michelle: Do you really believe all white people are this way? If you do, then you are mistaken. I have heard this concept before, coming from whites, though. "I'm not racist, but this black guy did such and such to me,

and they are all like that." What about people who have both white and black parents, do they turn on you only part of the time?

This is why racism and stereotypes continue. Because one person of a race pisses off another person from another race, and then all of us are like that because we have the same color of skin.

I know there are differences in races, but to me that has nothing to do with personality, and that is how I determine friends. I don't judge people because of the color of their skin, and please don't do that to me.

A**holes don't come in colors.

Michelle's response does not make use of narrative the way Sarah's does. Michelle had, however, in earlier responses discussed her background much the way Sarah does in her response to Jeff. But here, Michelle seems to be saying that Rashaad is not reasoning very well. Rather than distrusting logical analysis, Michelle seems to be saying if we reason logically (and don't use a faulty generalization), we can end racism. Rashaad isn't following the rules; Michelle's response is characteristic of the procedural knowledge from Women's Ways of Knowing.

Rachel(8, 23 and 31) is the third female in this discussion; she is more difficult to classify but more fun than any other student I've had. She provided me many moments of pure joy throughout the semester; she visits her mother's second grade class indicating a different family background than the other two girls. She wrote her personal essay on the monster under her bed. Let me set the scene a bit with a couple of her earlier entries:

Chicken Feet
Chicken feet./ Chicken feet.
Nothing tastes quite as sweet.
I love to eat./ Tangy chicken feet.
Yah..Yah../ Oh.. Oh..
They know how to fixem' in Soho,

Yah..Yah../ Oh.. Oh..

Give me a Pair and I'm ready to go.
Yah..Yah../ Oh.. Oh..
Chicken.....feet.....

Morality

All morality must be based on inner truth.
Any morality that goes against inner awareness is immoral.

Don't ever think you know what is right for the other person.
They might start thinking they know what is right for you.

Let go of everything you are holding onto.
Now Let Go of Everything Else.

We can learn to stop struggling by realizing we are naturally buoyant. If we relax (and persevere) we cannot drown.

Shoes

If the shoe fits, then wear it.

This should be changed to, "If the shoe is comfortable, then wear it." Just because the shoe fits doesn't mean that you will enjoy that particular shoe. The shoe could fit at that second or even for a few hours, but as the day goes on, a person could develop blisters. If the shoe fits even for a few weeks, a person could, still, develop corns or calluses.

It also depends on the weather.

It shouldn't have been surprising that Rachel(8) enters this dialogue as the first female and from a different perspective from everyone else in the class....a Utopian vision. I may be pushing it to say that this could be constructed knowledge (Women's Ways of Knowing), a sample of knowledge felt with knowledge learned during formal education. She is trying to apply utopian theory to the current discussion. And it wasn't until the end of the semester when I read all the student evaluations of the e-mail assignment, that I knew that Rachel was having as big an impact on other class members as she was having on me. She did make us look at things

from a different perspective.

> Rachel: If we are to live with each other in society, we must cooperate with one another. If we are to cooperate with one another, we must trust one another.
>
> In a utopian society ethnic backgrounds are embraced. Different religions co-exist with one another. Sexual orientation is respected.
>
> Utopian societies do exist. Through time maybe earth will catch up with the rest of the galaxy.

> H. Lemon: Rachel is responding to the discussion going on about racism; somehow we've brought the military into it, too. Sometimes when all these feelings are out in the open, the discussion can become too heated. We know the feelings are there, but if they aren't discussed openly, we don't have to address them.
>
> However, if we never discuss these feelings, they will probably never change either! So keep talking. Try to avoid name calling or what can be perceived as name calling. Keep it cool.
>
> Some of the latest responses have been very reasonable; when I come in on Friday morning, maybe the discussion will have progressed even further in a positive direction. Affirmative action programs are the center of a national debate right now. California plans to have the issue on an upcoming ballot; all sides of the issue are being addressed in the national press, so keep your eyes open. See you Friday.

Rachel's idealism is revealed in wishing for a utopian society; the fact that she knows about utopias indicates an awareness that many of my students do not have. She has not studied very many of them, however, for many utopian visions are accomplished at the cost of individual freedom or the suffering of one (some) for society. Brave New World and "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" are the two I use in the sophomore composition sequence.

As you can see, I used Rachel's first plea as my initial entry into the discussion (9). Some of my colleagues have said I should have stayed completely out; others have indicated I should have entered in a different fashion. My first entry was written

immediately after I had talked with Jammie; I thought he had agreed with the content in my message. That's why his response to Jeff (12) was a shock, therefore. After reading Thomas Kochman's book, I realized that I was asking my class to argue the way white people, especially white males, argue (relatively low-keyed, impersonal, and not challenging). Again, rereading the arguments after reading Thomas Kochman, I realize that Jammie and the others were arguing according to their rules. Smitty fit in better than Jeff and Paul by actually answering their points.

Rachel turned the tables on me with her second entry which occurred after the break (23). My second entry stopped the debate until we could research the topic a bit more and work with more objective material(18). I got lots of advice and had provided the class with readings on affirmative action, with a handout prepared by our Affirmative Action director, and with four editorials on the California Proposal, both pro and con. The last sheet of your handout describes the way I tried to bring the discussion back into the class.

The first step in the contractualist ethics system is to identify the stake holders in a controversy. The class wouldn't do that; Darrian and Rashaad began by saying that the legislation "mainly affects the blacks only so no one else can really understand it; no one else is affected." (quote is from Darrian's paper on the topic). That brought sighs and muttered comments from Paul and several of the class members. Some didn't want to stereotype any groups as feeling the same way, so I was drawing sub categories in every group we tried to identify. In a fifty minute

class period, we couldn't even agree on the stake holders. Rachel's reaction (23) is there for you to see.

She followed me out of class (and I wasn't a happy camper) and down to my office and said "That class made me sick." We talked for quite a while, and I urged her to write her reactions on the e-mail. Again her imagination describes a way for the class to talk to each other about the topic; as you can see Rashaad objected to any role playing at all.

> Rachel: Today's discussion made me sick. This issue hits too close to home to be indifferent while discussing Affirmative Action policies in California. CAlifornia just seems to be a big experimental playing ground for politicians. The requirement of disconnecting our personal feelings to enable us to complete this assignment appears impossible. For this reason, I'm personally creating an illusion.
>
> I am an intelligent creature from outer space. The species I belong to can me described as multi-formatted light energies.
>
> My species knows a great deal about alien societies. From our distant planet, we observe the struggles of human beings. To enable us to "keep up with the times" each energy is assigned a current foreign issue to read about and present back to the rest of the energies to inform them of the events of alien happenings.
>
> I have been assigned to the planet: Earth, Continent: North America, State: California, Issue: Affirmative Action Policies, Level: University.
>
> I know this sounds weird, but to enable myself to disconnect my feelings from this assignment, I believe that such a scenario needs to be incorporated. Maybe it sounds crazy, but to keep sane while doing this assignment, that is what I am going to do.
>
> Feel free to join me in this illusion. Or feel free to call me a fool. Whatever.

> Rashaad: I am really having a hard time understanding this role play assignment because all the information we are using is definitely for real. This law that will be passed will have a serious domino effect, and this will happen from state to state. the people that it will really affect is Black People, and history shows this time and time again. "To my black people, we have to raise up; nobody cares if we live or die."
> Sincerely, Don't take everything for face value.

I chose seven different stakeholders and spent quite a bit of time dividing the class into groups to proceed with the next steps. The rest of the process worked fairly well. The groups worked well in planning their presentations (Step 2 on the back of your handout) although both Jammie and Paul were absent that day and Jammie was absent during the actual presentation. We sat in a big circle and each group presented their ideal solutions without comments from the other groups, then had questions at the end. I saw a few lights go on for a couple of the students who had been arguing pretty adamantly on one side of the issue. Paul was the only one who presented the same old opinions; Darrian came up with the most original solution to help ease racism on the campus without using a race-based system. I was disappointed in the number of polished papers presented for the final step since I was using a portfolio system, and only two of the class members actually chose this assignment to be graded. The problem with affirmative action is that most people have made up their minds and won't change them.

You can see from the sample evaluations (29-31) of the listserv that the students felt this was a good assignment; Jammie's was typical and indicated the central role Rachel played on the list. The issue of racism did resurface occasionally as the interchange between Rashaad (25) and Paul (26) over the OJ Simpson trial indicates. Ironically, after all the hostility coming from Paul, Rashaad intended to send him ideas for improving life in the dorm (28); "I hope you can make it a better living for me."

To conclude, I suppose I should go back and list the 16

lessons I learned this semester by using a listserv instead of a journal; actually, I learned far more than 16. I do know that I learned more than any of my students; I have understood more from this brief segment of the class discussions the more reading I do of black and white communication styles and of feminine ways of knowing and responding. And I wind up thinking that Rachel's pleas for trust and understanding will be more realizable the more all of us understand these patterns of communication.

Hallie S. Lemon

Spring Semester 1995
Lemon-L Excerpts

Darrian: there was an article in the Western Courier and the title was Minority Scholarships Threaten Equality. It was written by a guy named Thad Reuter, but the point I don't understand is what does he mean when he says Minority scholarships threaten equality. I feel that if anybody should be talking about equality, it should be minorities. If anybody had been robbed of opportunities, it has been black people, and it has been going on for some 400 odd years. I don't feel that there is any way shape or form that a couple of minority scholarships can threaten equality in the United States because there is NO EQUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES. PERIOD!
I'M OUT!! PEACE.

1

Smitty: Whoa!! Hold up there, bucko. A) The very concept of having scholarships or whatever for a specific group of people while excluding others is not equal. However, there are also a lot of scholarships here at Western which are exclusively for residents of this county, and that's not fair either. The point is that can't give dollars away like water. B) The main problem from what I see is that minorities think of themselves as separate entities, not Americans. the USA is a country of different backgrounds; the problem is that in the past people have been judged by race, which beyond their control. This is unfortunate but I believe in my heart that excluding certain fanatic exceptions, the American people are moving towards equity every day. BUT! when minority groups are constantly screaming about how poorly they're treated when no real injustices occur, it only breeds resentment in their opposite's minds. C) Your last statement is flat out WRONG. There is a place of total and complete equality in the United States. It's called the Military.

2

Paul: Smitty, I know 90% where you are coming from. We think alike except for the military part. I was in for four years and the military turned me into a racist pig. It took me two years to clear the cloud of racism from my brain. I don't know what service you served in or for how long, but it sure wasn't in the active Air Force.

3

Darrian: Minorities don't think of themselves as separate entities. It's America who treat us like separate entities. And it's people like you who are so close-minded that keep the problem we have today. As far as your first statement goes, it has been white people from the very beginning that have held scholarships from all other groups of people because minorities don't control scholarships. And for your second statement, your thinking is all screwed up; how in anyone's right mind can they say that minority groups are constantly screaming about how poorly we've been treated when no real injustices occur. My question to you is what world have you been living in the last 18 years. And for your last statement about my being wrong that there's no equality in the United States, if there were equality in the United States why in the hell was there slavery , police dogs biting black people in the streets and policemen clubbing black women and children. Or why did blacks have to march on WAshington or why couldn't blacks sit on the front of the bus. You should get my point by now; if you don't, I don't care. And for the military thing, I need not reply so F--- the MILITARY.
P.S. MY NAME'S NOT BUCKO. IT'S PROUD BLACK MAN!

Rashaad: To whom it may concern,
It was very shocking to hear what was in today's Courier, and even more shocking to read for myself the racial tension that flowed from the lips of this Thad Reuter character. What Thad is doing is basically crying wolf because he's bitching about a problem that doesn't exist. this article is clearly made up of smoke and mirrors; he is attempting to take us back about 35 years to make the white male feel more

secure. And if Thad had bothered to research this topic instead of forming this article on his opinions, he would have found out that the statistics show that there is no effect on the while male because of affirmative action. Thad stated in his article that he feels no guilt. Well, that is why we need affirmative action, to remind you people what we been through. Sometimes I tend to think if we followed Malcolm X and demanded our respect "by any means necessary," we wouldn't have these problems in the 90's. And another thing is that if we actually got back what the white man owes us like the forty acres and the mule, we wouldn't need affirmative action; we would own our own companies and hire our own black people. And one thing you people should remember is that you can stem the tide, but you cannot stop it because by the year 2000 there will be more women and minorities than there will be white people. By cutting opportunities for us, you will only hurt America.

Smitty: Personally, I have to state the maxim "by any means necessary" scares the hell out of me. The ends never justify the means in a sane world, and any person who starts down that path will quickly find himself on the wrong end of morality and God. Second, had the black man followed through with this policy to its logical conclusion, he would have found himself in the same fate as the Native American. Compared to the Indians former numbers, they have been nearly wiped out by the white man. What does this say about my race? Quite simply that we are prepared to neutralize and/or kill anything that violently endangers us. History has illustrate this for thousands of years.

On a different note, I envy the black culture's unity. My own race, I have found, feel absolutely no loyalty towards one another due to race. May ancestors for thousands of years have been merchants and explorers intent on forwarding their own individual and family goal at the expense of anyone else. I myself am not terribly proud of this fact, but it goes a ways towards explaining things which have happened through history. However, there are now no new frontiers and no new markets to exploit. Where do my people go from here? I think it is obvious that now we must learn from those we have conquered (to a certain extent that is). But before we, all Americans, can learn from each other, the minority groups, the fanatics, and the white majority must stop seeing each other as the enemy.

Darrian: How can all people stop looking at each other as the enemy if you don't let us. The statement, "by any means necessary" only meant black people had to do what ever they had to do to gain equality. If White America thinks that they can just conquer anyone them damn well please whenever they see fit, they have another thing coming. We are not the Indians, and we are not some third world country that you can just walk all over. It's time for White America to face the music and stop trying to act like slavery didn't happen.

Rashaad: Poor Smitty. I think you need to take another look at black people because we are definitely not the Native Americans. You know everyone keeps bringing up the fact that this is the 90's and that it is. We are a new breed of the Black Man, and there are just certain things we are not going to put up with the way our forefathers did. A little history lesson for you is that the Americans were losing the Spanish American War, that is until the black military moved in, so if you think we are just going to let anyone conquer us prepare to get f**ked right on up.

Sincerely, Ain't taking no sh*t!

Rachel: If we are to live with each other in society, we must cooperate with one another. If we are to cooperate with one another, we must trust one another. 8

In a utopian society ethnic backgrounds are embraced. Different religions co-exist with one another. Sexual orientation is respected.

Utopian societies do exist. through time maybe earth will catch up with the rest of the galaxy.

H. Lemon: Rachel is responding to the discussion going on about racism; somehow we've brought the military into it, too. Sometimes when all these feelings are out in the open, the discussion can become 9

too heated. We know the feelings are there, but if they aren't discussed openly, we don't have to address them.

However, if we never discuss these feelings, they will probably never change either! So keep talking. Try to avoid name calling or what can be perceived as name calling. Keep it cool.

Some of the latest responses have been very reasonable; when I come in on Friday morning, maybe the discussion will have progressed even further in a positive direction. Affirmative action programs are the center of a national debate right now. California plans to have the issue on an upcoming ballot; all sides of the issue are being addressed in the national press, so keep your eyes open. See you Friday.

Heather: In response to everybody talking about racism and scholarships and so on, I have to add a few things. I believe we are all equal, and I have been raised all my life to believe that, so I never really thought I would be discriminated against for who I am. I was shocked to find out that in my senior year in high school, one of my good friends applied to the University of Illinois and got in with worse grades than me. I mean, I tried so hard in high school to bring my grades up and get into a college that I really wanted, but the fact is that my grades weren't all that good. But my friend's weren't either. She got in because she wrote herself as a minority.

My friend has never acknowledged her side that they call a minority. It seemed like she only wanted to acknowledge it when it got her into the school she wanted. She doesn't tell people that that's how she got in, but she told me. Now that she's at the U of I, she's doing terrible! I mean, she got half the grade point average that I am getting, and I didn't even get accepted.

Everybody always says how the so-called minorities are being discriminated against, and I hate that there are people in this world who like hurting and putting down others. I think we are all equal and should have the same opportunities. But this is pushing it a little too far; we are going in the wrong direction. We did need it at some time, but when it comes down to letting someone in college because they have a little Mexican in them somewhere in one of their old ancestors, it's not fair.

I believe we are giving away jobs to people for the wrong reasons. The person who can best do the job should get the job. This world is very competitive, and everybody has to struggle to get ahead. This is an easy way out, and I think it's wrong. Treat everybody as equal and how you want to be treated, and you'll be happy.

Mary: Hi everyone. Well, after reading the e-mail, I don't know what to say about this discrimination thing. I don't really care. I am not here to hate people for any reason. I am here to get an education not to determine who is better than the other. Maybe someday everyone will get along, but until they do, live your life. Don't worry about other people. Especially if they have nothing to do with you. Life is too short to hate. Make the most out of your life. I sure am. That's all I have to say about that.

About getting a job, I need one bad. I would really like a waitressing job. If anyone knows of a restaurant looking for a waitress, please let me know. Thanks, and I will see you all Friday.

Rashaad: I will just say a couple of things to respond to Heather's attitude about racism; we do need to have minority programs so racist people don;t get ahead of us. We have them because the work force today, the employers are looking at the color of our skin and not hiring us. Mary, if you don't care, you are an ASSET.

Jeff: I have just read something today on racism which for the most part I didn't really follow, but the one thing that did stand out was the attitude that came across. Personally, attitude is the one thing that will kill any improvement on racism. Some lines stood out. The first was from a white person, and it was "we need to learn something from the people we had conquered." The second was from a black person, "If the white man thinks they are going to conquer anyone they please, then they have another damn thing coming." Well, I believe the first one was written about the past and possibly should have used different words. But the reply had an attitude about it that is not going to help at all.

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First of all, we are living in the 90's and there has been no real fighting in America except for gang wars, so if you are thinking that there is going to be a war then it will most likely have to do with gangs and will not be black against white. Second, there was something that talked about 40 acres and a mule and the black man would want nothing to do with the white man. Well, I'm sorry, but america owes nothing to any race. You see, where I'm from, when you walk out of Walgreens and see that red BMW pulling away and realize that was the black man or woman you were just standing behind wearing the leather and all the gucci sweats and they just got done paying for everything with food stamps, well, it just pisses me off. Another example is when I am at the grocery and the black guy in front of me is buying the best steaks and all the top notch stuff with food stamps, come on. It may not be like this everywhere, but where I am from, the black race whines about everything unless they are treated like royalty.

Sarah: Jeff, I just read your e-mail account, and I'm not sure I follow you either. Before I came to school, the only real associations I had with anyone black was during volleyball tournaments or basketball tournaments. That never really allowed me to talk to anyone--white or black--because when I was in competition with anyone on the courts, I wasn't exactly the sweetest person. Actually I was kinda mean.

Anyway, I grew up without going to school with any black kids, and my dad grew up in a racist home, just like my grandfather. But my mother and sister aren't like that at all, and my father isn't bad; he just knows what his father and grandfather told him. I came to Western and made a lot of friends, including a lot of black friends. I'm not quite sure who does and doesn't accept that in my family and throughout my friends, but I know I don't feel sorry for any race. I've always been taught to treat everyone equal, and I truly see everyone's point, but I don't understand racism. Jeff, there are just as many white people or families that abuse food stamps as there are black families. I don;'t agree with that remark.

In another example, as everyone should know, black history month is coming up, and on my floor my R.A. asked a girl on my floor to make a bulletin board for it that is in front of the elevators (yes, she is black). She asked me to help which I am going to do. It is an opportunity to learn something that someone else takes seriously. But I have noticed some attitudes on my floor about it. Some people have moved signs, just asking for trouble. I believe this is disrespectful. I have even heard, on the other side, that we have white history eleven months out of the year, and we should just pay black history some attention, and I agree. I know everyone is entitled to their opinions; I just wish everyone could get past something like this; I guess I just don't understand.

John: I think that how you feel about racism is how you were raised, or what your surroundings are. Until a situation like now , where you get to hear everyone else's view and actually meet the other race. When I grew up, I grew up in such a small community that I didn't know any minorities at all. I never met a black person until my sister had a few black friends in college, and I liked them. all her friends let me party with them and treated me older than I really was; it was cool. And when I got to meeting more, some of them were cool and some were assholes. I don't like the people that whine all the time about it, unless you have a reason like Heather's. I don't see a reason in Rashaad's; I think he has been listening to his friends too much to even give white people a chance. And Darrian keeps pointing out slavery like it is still a problem. Slavery is over 100 years old; it's over. This is the 1990's. Why can't everyone just be cool with each other?

Rashaad: First of all, I am a very good listener; I learn from my experiences as well as the people God has put around me because they are there for a reason, believe it or not. Part of the problem with people like you is that you don't listen to what people have to say unless it is similar to what you have to say and that is unfair within itself. And for anyone who wants to know, yes, I have experienced racism on this campus. So for you to say that I listen to my friends too much is totally wrong, and if you paid attention in class, you could see by the way I participate in class, I give white more than just a chance, so maybe you just needed something to say over the e-mail. And maybe try to throw something a little

more educated my way next time.

Michelle: Do you really believe all white people are this way? If you do, then you are mistaken. I have heard this concept before, coming from whites, though. "I'm not racist, but this black guy did such and such to me, and they are all like that." What about people who have both white and black parents, do they turn on you only part of the time?

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This is why racism and stereotypes continue. Because one person of a race pisses off another person from another race, and then all of us are like that because we have the same color of skin.

I know there are differences in races, but to me that has nothing to do with personality, and that is how I determine friends. I don't judge people because of the color of their skin, and please don't do that to me.

A**holes don't come in colors.

Paul: Rashaad, come on now. You give white more than just a chance. I guess we all know who has the problems with racism.

Rashaad: As a matter of fact, Paul, I do have a problem with racism, and maybe if you read a little better than you do, you can see that I gave an example. You stereotype all black people because of what you see on that idiot box.

Jammie: Jeff, first of all, what do you mean when you say, "America owes nothing to any race"? Are you classifying only whites as Americans? If that's the case, then hell, yes, America owes! First of all, AMERICA stole this land from the Indians. First, they lied to them; then they place them in restricted areas where they were wildlife. Mind you, this was after they used them for their knowledge of the land including how to farm and use its other resources. If you as me AMERICA still has a few payments to go!

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Now, does AMERICA owe Blacks? Well, hell, if I'm not mistaken, didn't Blacks help AMERICA in the Rev War, not to mention get its independence. And slavery.....oooh boy! AMERICA owes Blacks for the suffering our ancestors endured during their "exciting" vacation here from Africa. Don't get me wrong, I don't want handouts from AMERICA; all I want is the sam opportunities AMERICA has. I can honestly say, though, AMERICA has made some improvements. I mean, now Blacks can eat at DENNY'S!!! hahahaha! It may have taken some 400+ years, but it's a start.

Now, (referring to my second statement) if that's not the case, then excuse my ignorance. I don't think anyone has the time to be racist with the tough times of today. You never know who you might need.

Jammie: Jeff, One more thing. Math question for you; if there are more whites than blacks, doesn't that mean there are more whites on welfare? If so, dontcha think that there are just as many if not more abusing the system? CAN YA' HELP ME WIT DIS ONE??

Bobbi: Well, this is a big topic. And everyone does seem to have their own opinion. There are so many people I agree with on this issue and there are the people that take that side way too far. Everyone has got to realize that there are many sides to this issue. 1) Yes, there needs to be a minority scholarship but only to insure that the few racist people in the world don't pass up the minorities. 2) And I also agree with Heather that everyone should work hard and move up to get what they want. 3) I have to say that most of all, I agree with Mary: live your life for today, not yesterday and not tomorrow. 4) I really like Rachel's input on the conversation. I believe that until we all learn to trust and love one another for what we are inside, not for what you see, the world will become a better place. And for a follow up, we need to consider ourselves one race: "americans" and be happy.

Michelle: This is the last thing I will have to say about racism unless any one challenges me. And if they do, then they are probably racists and don't deserve a response.

They way I feel about it is that in my eyes, everybody is equal. I judge people on how they treat me, and I like or dislike them on an individual basis. I give everyone a chance, and I can't stand racism or sexism. I used to ask my mom when we were watching Geraldo, why this guy sitting on the stage was so ignorant and stupid. I would say, where did they find this guy? Couldn't they come up with a guy who could at least form a sentence? She would tell me that only ignorant people would feel that way and that was the only type of person to represent that point of view. I still believe this, and to me this holds true. I am not out to be accepted by people who judge on color because they are not worth the time of day. This is me, and if you don't like it, then that's you. Deal with it.

Adam: I have a question for everybody. A friend of mine goes to the University of Wisconsin and is on the soccer team. About a week ago the coach called him into his office and told him that the Athletic Department is making the guys' soccer team cut eight players in order to make it fair for the girls' team. I guess it is because all the guys and girls receive free shoes and warm ups when they are on the team, and they need to save money to put into the girls' program. So they need to have equality of numbers of players on each team. I was just wondering if anybody thought this was right.

My opinion on the matter is that it is wrong. They shouldn't force the team to cut players. They should find some other source of money to supply the girls with. I thought this was kind of like the scholarship for race because they are taking away from one group to give to another. If nobody understands what I am talking about, then maybe I'm just insane. Later.

Rashaad: If I respond to every ignorant thing I get over e-mail, I would be in here all day, but, Adam, I am going to take the time to respond to you. If you would do some research on all scholarships, you would find out that it doesn't take away from anyone. "Start educating yourself and you would be a whole lot better person to talk to."

Adam: RAshaad, first of all, I wasn't attacking you like you seem to think everybody is doing. I was just writing about a form of discrimination. Second, where do they get this money for these scholarships? Is it out os some secret bank account that nobody knows about? I would like you to explain this.

H. Lemon: OK. I give up. At least for the time being, lets stop the discussion on this topic. I am reading angry messages in which you are calling each other names. You are not listening to what the other person is saying.

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Maybe later in the semester when we have all calmed down, we can research the issue of racism on this campus in a more objective fashion. Or we can talk about the issue of affirmative action in a more structured way. I have been collecting articles about it from various points of view.

On Monday, we will be in the lab drafting the interview papers. Send me any questions you have about form, etc. I'll answer them on Monday when I see you in class. Have a good weekend!

Rashaad: I find it very ironic that as soon as I, a black man, respond to a white majority class, the conversation would be called off. I feel that I have offended noone, and if I did, they probably deserved it for offending me. This whole topic started around line 94 [e-mail entries], and I didn't even respond to anyone's statement until line 204; I wonder why you didn't call it off before that. Throughout the whole conversation, I have tried to be open and understanding to everyone's opinion, but I realize we are two different races, and no matter how hard I try to make you people understand our pain, and yes, there is still pain, you will never understand. But I am not surprised by the way this institution is being run, so on that note, THANK GOD THIS CONVERSATION IS OVER.

Darrian: Did not do much but work over the weekend and go to a birthday party. Iv;e just read Ms.

Lemon's response, and I don't really understand what she wants the class to do on the e-mail. I thought this program was set up for people to express their thoughts, ideas and opinions. When this class first started, Ms. Lemon told the class this was just journal writing on the e-mail. So I feel that a journal writing of mine should not be responded to as bullshit and overlooked. And as soon as I stand up for what I believe in, the whole issue is called off. Maybe there should be rules set to this e-mail or maybe some people shouldn't respond to other people's e-mail if they don't h ave anything nice to say. Glad it's over!

Jammie: I just wanted to say I'm glad we are not talking about the 'r' word anymore. Who's going to the game tonight? I am!! this one should be a good one, not that the others weren't. See you tomorrow.

Smitty: I apologize for my absence; I frequent the e-mail infrequently.

What I have read here this evening has deeply troubled me. My heart is heavy for I fear that it was my own fault that all this hatred came to a head. To begin with, in my first response to Rashaad, I misspoke myself. I said many things, the jist of which is that my race has done many terrible things, that my ancestors were opportunistic and mean. I did not, however, say that I agreed with them. I had thought that this line was intended to be a safe environment to express opinions and to learn from others. I was wrong. Rashaad, I can literally feel your hate and hostility. If I thought it would make anything better, I would offer my own blood for that of your forefathers. I doubt that it would, though. I further doubt that you can understand what I just said.

I think that this line is NOT THE PLACE FOR INSULTS. Although I myself have used curses on this line, I have never directed them towards another and was actually rather shocked. I am sad to know that I have participated in this. I am shamed to be associated with it. If you truly cannot let this go, Rashaad, if you feel it is your duty to continue despite the weariness I hear in many voices, come to me. You have insulted me on a personal level. At first, I wished to respond in kind; fortunately, I didn't get up in time to use the lab on Saturday. Slavery was in the past, and so were many of the things I spoke of. The past is prologue, and it was a mistake to bring it into the light on my part; I should have foreseen this. The sins of the father cannot be held over the son's head forever. As our classmate, John, said, "Why can't we all be cool?" I don't know, and I fear I will not live long enough to come to an understanding.

I apologize to one and all for the mess I have made of things. History documents hat I said originally, BUT WE DON'T LIVE IN HISTORY; we must all walk a path of our own choosing.

I WILL SPEAK NO MORE OF THIS.

Cassandra: My topic is on racism here at Western. There seems to be this growing problem among Blacks and whites. My ideal audience would be those students who have personally dealt with racism on a first-hand basis. that would be a lot of students here at Western. Some questions I would ask:

1) Why is it that we can't judge people by how a person treats you individually?
2) Why is there such hatred for a group of people solely on the basis of their skin color?
3) Do we hate a race of people just because we don't know all about them or because whites feel Blacks are trying to take something that is theirs?

Rachel: Cassandra, I don't know why people can't judge others by how they are treated; personally, I think it's ignorance. I think hatred comes from the fear of difference. I think people hate because of fear.

Break in discussion - Start Contractualist Ethics Assignment

Rachel: Today's discussion made me sick. This issue hits too close to home to be indifferent while discussing Affirmative Action policies in California. CAlifornia just seems to be a big experimental playing ground for politicians. the requirement of disconnecting our personal feelings to enable us to complete this assignment appears impossible. For this reason, I'm personally creating an illusion.

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I am an intelligent creature from outer space. the species I belong to can me described as multi-formatted light energies.

My species knows a great deal about alien societies. From our distant planet, we observe the struggles of human beings. To enable us to "keep up with the times" each energy is assigned a current foreign issue to read about and present back to the rest of the energies to inform them of the events of alien happenings.

I have been assigned to the planet: Earth, Continent: North America, State: California, Issue: Affirmative Action Policies, Level: University.

I know this sounds weird, but to enable myself to disconnect my feelings from this assignment, I believe that such a scenario need to be incorporated. Maybe it sounds crazy, but to keep sane while doing this assignment, that is what I am going to do.

Feel free to join me in this illusion. Or feel free to call me a fool. Whatever.

Rashaad: I am really having a hard time understanding this role play assignment because all the information we are using is definitely for real. this law that will be passed will have a serious domino effect, and this will happen from state to state. the people that it will really affect is Black People, and history shows this time and time again. "To my black people, we have to raise up; nobody cares if we live or die."
Sincerely, Don't take everything for face value.

Rashaad: I have been watching the Simpson case, and I feel the whole court system is all fucked up. For example when the judge walks in, everyone has to rise, and he is referred to as Your Honor. The system
25 puts more black people in jail for the wrong crime than they do white people, and that is true because we as black people had nothing to do with the making of this system. What I think should happen is that every rule or every legislation that was ever made without a black man's input should be overturned and we make new rules. Because they are consumed with racism.

Paul: I didn't want to get things started on the e-mail again about racism but it seems like whenever Rashaad writes an entry, there is always racial undertones. I wonder who has the problem with racism? How can we as Americans forget this injustice when we're always reminded of it? I am so sick and tired of hearing about his everyday. when are people going to just drop it? It seems to me that Rashaad is
26 using the same injustice to fight his battles, for example affirmative action. He wants it to end racism, but all it is doing is prejudicing the people who are qualified for the job. It is sad (in some cases) a person gets hired just for the color of his skin and not his qualifications. I thought that we gave that up with the Approclamation Amancipation [sic]. Isn't that what Rashaad is trying to uphold? Most Americans understood the wrongs of slavery; that is why this document was created. Now some people want to be hired only for their color. Doesn't this go totally against what this document means?
All Fed Up!

Paul: I am happy to say that I am registered for all my classes. I also was elected as Vice President of Higgins Hall for next semester. If anybody lives in my hall, drop me a letter so you all can give me some hints on how to help dorm life.

Rashaad: Congratulations, Paul. I will also be in Higgins Hall next semester. I couldn't find an apartment
28 off campus, so I decided to live in Higgins. I hope to see you there next semester, and I hope you can make it a better living for me.
P. S. I will be sending you some ideas for the dorm.

Representative of the 20 Positive Evaluations

Jammie: I have really enjoyed using the e-mail this semester. I had heard about it before I got to college, but I never used it until then. It's always been fun learning new things especially on the computers. I liked being able to talk to everyone across the internet. I enjoyed reading what everyone wrote, especially some of the things that Rachel wrote. I don't remember who said it, but they were right when they said she makes you think.

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Out of 22 evaluations, the only two negative ones:

Smitty: Okay, seriously now. At first I thought this was a really neat thing and I was excited to be a part of it. However, after a certain series of incidents, my enthusiasm was shot to hell. After a while, I quit sending and responding to my messages and didn't look at my mail that often. The messages I did try to continue reading were Rachel's. Whatever anyone else may think, I like the way Rachel writes and thinks (though I don't agree with the details sometimes) and just basically find her messages funny/thought-provoking. This is opposed to the normal hum-drum of weather and sports-figure worship.

P. S. If I have offended anyone, I am not particularly sorry at all.

30

Rachel: I liked the e-mail experience, but I feel like it held me back. The main reason is that I didn't want to offend anyone. When I wrote, I am very cautious about how it will affect other people. Knowing that the e-mail messages were going to be viewed by other people made me nervous. I change my mind about things constantly. My views and thoughts are never stagnant. Consequently, I found it extremely hard to write down anything for fear that I would have to defend my thoughts at that particular time, during a particular day, feeling a particular way. this cowardly presentation of thoughts frustrated me. I have a voice but I use it selectively.

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Contractualist Ethics Assignment:

Step One: Based on the readings on Affirmative Action and the California Proposal, the class will identify the stake holders.

Step Two: Groups will be meeting to construct solutions.
University Administration: Bobbi, Jammie, Paul
U.S. Products (the company that hires the largest numbers of university grads each year): Sarah, Darrian, Leanne, and Pete
Student Groups
Blacks and Hispanic Students for Change: Misty, Joe, Cassandra
Asian Students: Heather, Jeff, Maggie
Black Students Against the Proposal: Julie, Rashaad, Chad
Hispanic Students against the Proposal: Adam, Smitty, Rachel
White Students: John, Mary, Michelle

Each group will construct its ideal solution to the controversy:

> ***First explore your group's perspective; identify your concerns, values and interests; explain why these are important to you; rank your concerns in order of importance; explain why some are more important than others.***

Identify an ideal solution; construct a solution which above all protects your interests, addresses your concern, and incorporates your values; if you could call the shots and not have to worry about the complaints of others, how would you solve the problem being considered?

Step Three: Each group will publicly report its solution and defend it. If time, the groups will try to construct compromise positions.

Step Four: (This truncated the other steps in the Contractualist Ethics system presented by Thia Wolf and others at the 1994 ISETA Conference). Begin drafting a dialogue between two of the positions argued by the stake holders in class. You may quote from any of the hand outs by simply using the author's (first &) last name. In your dialogue, each side must speak at least three times with a minimum of 100 words each time.

Sources

In this paper, I propose to present and analyze an e-mail conversation which will show the black and white communication patterns (as identified by Thomas Kochman's Black and White: Styles in Conflict, 1981) and characterize the rhetorical strategies of the female students who tried to intervene between the black and white males.

Karen Dace (Western Journal of Black Studies, April, 1994) has described this dissonance which occurs when African Americans and European Americans attempt to communicate.

A better way to discuss the topic was presented in a handout at Western's multicultural seminar this May: Steven R. Shalom's "Teaching About Affirmative Action" in Fall 1994's Transformations.